

FREE DIGITAL MAGAZINE

Motorboat Owner

MARCH 2019

Affordable practical boating



BOAT TEST

Silver Raptor



Jeanneau NC33

Birchwood TS31 ● Spring Cleaning ● Cruising to Norway

Silver Raptor



BOAT TEST

Length (LOA): 8.05 m

Beam: 2.76 m

Weight: 2,150 kg

Fuel capacity: 260 litres

Water capacity: 60 litres

People capacity: 10

Max power: 350 hp

Engine as tested: Suzuki DF350

Other engine options: Honda

or Suzuki 250hp, 300hp

Price from (Honda BF250) **£118,699**

Price tested (Suzuki DF350) **£127,799**





Those who have known [Silver](#) throughout its 28-year history have become confident about what to expect. It's a company that has built its name on the back of compact outboard-powered open boats in Side Console, Centre Console, Day Cruiser and Bow Rider configurations. It has tended to build these boats using a hybrid 'Alufibre' form of construction, involving aluminium hulls and plastic interior linings, each material isolated from the other by means of a rubber compound. This long-standing Silver formula was of course broadened in 2017 with the advent of the 'X' series, which used full aluminium construction, both inside and out, but for 2019, we also now have the 'Z' series, which abandons aluminium altogether and uses fibreglass as the sole construction material.

Plainly then, despite its reputation for

rapid aluminium runabouts from 16 to 21 feet in length, things at Silver are changing and yet the appearance of the new [Raptor](#) represents a much bolder tangent than it first appears. After all, not only is this the first fully fibreglass boat to emerge from the yard but, at eight metres in length, this new flagship model is also far and away the company's largest to date. Of course, there's no reason why a fresh approach to size and building materials should necessarily mean a wholesale departure from established design and construction methods, but even a cursory glance at the hull lines suggests that the Raptor is very different indeed.

The Petestep rides again

Conceived by Norwegian design house, Eker Design AS, the Raptor uses the same Petestep hull we first witnessed on Yamarin's short-lived 81 DC. The idea



“Raptor by name, Raptor by nature. A Finnish flagship with a difference”

behind it is to generate an easy-driving, soft-riding and stable hull that looks great from the outside and keeps the interior living spaces very modern and clean-lined. It aims to do that by employing a broad beam and a relatively shallow, undercut forefoot, with steeply angled spray rails that deflect the spray downwards rather than sideways. In addition to generating a quieter and drier ride, the Petestep's design principles suggest that the extra lift from the vertical spray deflection should also help soften the impacts underway by actively graduating the upward forces operating on the hull's underside. Though it looks and sounds quite unusual, what we're basically talking about here are reverse chines, which are a well proven and widely used element of recreational hull design.

That said, when you get underway, the Petestep feels almost as different as it

looks. It shifts onto the plane with fuss-free efficiency in around four seconds and accelerates through 40 knots in a little over 20 seconds to a top end of almost 47 knots at wide-open-throttle. That's around five knots more than Yamarin's 300hp 81 DC achieved and, with a decent fistful of trim to move the point of impact aft and free up the forward sections of the hull, it handles the pace very well. On a



Unlike anything else on the water. The forward hull shape is quite raked and undercut



PERFORMANCE						
RPM	Knots	LPH	GPH	MPG	Range (nm)	Noise
Idle (650)	2.7	2.16	0.48	5.63	260	47.0
1000	4.0	4.00	0.88	4.54	208	50.0
1500	5.9	8.26	1.82	3.24	148.6	68.0
2000	6.9	11.73	2.58	2.67	122.4	69.0
2500	8.6	22.36	4.92	1.75	80	75.0
3000	15.6	28.08	6.18	2.52	115.6	78.0
3500	24.0	36.00	7.92	3.03	138.7	80.5
4000	31.4	43.96	9.67	3.25	148.6	85.0
4500	36.0	64.80	14.25	2.53	115.6	86.0
5000	40.0	80.00	17.60	2.27	104	87.5
5500	43.2	99.36	21.86	1.98	90.4	89.5
6000	46.5	106.95	23.53	1.98	90.4	90.5

moderate sea, even at high speeds, the big beamy Raptor feels as though it's cruising well within itself, a sensation in no way diminished by the sheer scale, depth and security of the driving environment. There's not a hint of cavitation, however hard you push, and in gentle conditions like this, it's difficult not to feel like you're at the helm of a cruise-optimised 30-footer.

And yet the unusual shape of the Petestep hull also seems to bring out some less confidence-inspiring characteristics. For instance, the shortening of the waterline length engendered by the undercut bow shape seems to create a peculiar sense of lateral uncertainty underway. While the promised softness of ride is, for the most part, present and

correct, the lateral stability on the plane, whether in gentle waters or through confused chop, leaves you feeling unsure about how to dial it out. There is of course a tendency to launch a little when you put that bow shape into the wrong swell at the wrong speed but the majority of the impacts seem to come at you from the side. Regardless of how you choose to drive, you find yourself prodded gently left and right, left and right, when your rate of progress and the modesty of the sea state



The elevated twin helm is very well appointed. Our test boat was fitted with a Suzuki 350hp outboard

“You feel like you are at the helm of a cruise-optimised 30 footer”



suggest that no such sensation ought to occur.

The driving experience is a slightly mixed bag in other ways too. For instance, at displacement speeds, the cabin space seems to amplify the water noise as the chop flicks and tickles at the undercut bow. And while the gruff, rasping engine note of the top-rated Suzuki DF350 inevitably limits refinement in the cockpit at high speeds, the steering is also noticeably over-weighted. While your natural inclination at the helm is to remedy the hull's lateral shifts with an ongoing series of adjustments, such is the stiffness of the wheel that you have to make any substantial alterations two-handed. It's unfortunate because if the steering was light and agile, the helm

might well feel like a more confidence-inspiring place to be.

Extraordinary internals

If the driving experience feels slightly odd, the internal space is memorable in some very positive ways. The helm station, for instance, sits on an elevated tier, above the deepset cockpit and both visibility and ergonomics here feel spot on. The beautiful six-spoke sports wheel comes with tilt-adjustable steering and you also get an intuitive Zipwake trim control system as standard, positioned by your throttle hand, exactly where you would want it. There's a pair of cupholders and a rubberised dashtop shelf for your loose gear, as well as a screen demister, an armrest for your throttle hand, a



The galley is much more spacious than you expect. Its bathing platform offers fantastic watersports potential



dashboard recess for your iPad and a grippy, composite teak-lined foot brace to keep you securely in your seat.

Protection at the helm, for both skipper and co-pilot, is also extremely impressive but it's actually the use of the twin starboard helm seat that sets the tone for the rest of the internal space. It frees up the port side of the upper tier for a two-metre galley, complete with gas stove, fridge-freezer, sink and worktop – and that in turn leaves the lower cockpit entirely free to dedicate itself to the needs of sitting, dining, lounging and sunbathing. With its huge U-shaped sofa, wrapping around the cockpit's periphery, alongside a pair of diagonal tables, it can be rigged as an open deck, as a four-man dining station with a clear port walkway; as an eight-man dining station; or as the largest sunbathing platform you will ever see on a boat of this size. Better still, if you invest in the all-over canopies with their black-out curtains, you can use it as a separate guest bedroom, complete with

a transverse privacy curtain to separate those in the aft space from those further forward. It's arguably a better solution than the integrated guest cabin which runs fore and aft beneath the upper tier of the cockpit, but in all cases, the fact that six people can spend a relatively comfy weekend on board the Raptor is extremely impressive.

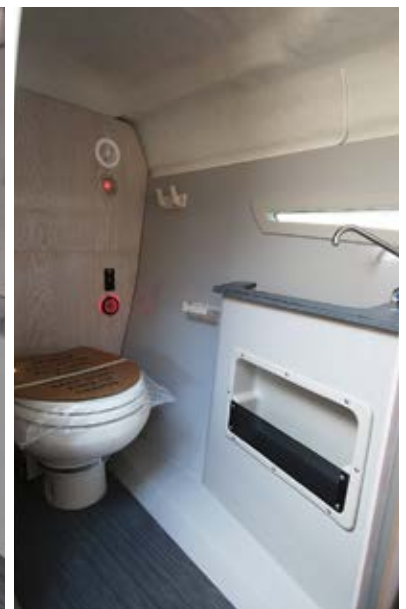
There's a rare degree of security here too. That comes partly from the elevated screen rim, which extends all the way back to the aft bench, and partly from the cockpit's position beneath the helm's upper tier. It's as deepset a cockpit as you will ever see on a boat as compact as this and, while it means that forward visibility is next to zero, it does enable you to take young kids out, safe in the knowledge that there is next to no chance of anyone managing to find their way overboard by accident.

Further aft, the multi-tier swim platforms are also extremely generous both in terms of scale and provision. They



come with plenty of changing space, allied to a pair of large anchor lockers, a swim ladder and a couple of storage spaces for your fenders. And while on the test boat, the squat steel A-frame at the forward edge of the engine well makes contact with the cowling when you try to lift the outboard's leg clear of the water, this is one of very few flaws on a boat that features

plenty of very positive small details. For instance, inside the aft bench, the double-battery bank is neatly protected from wayward baggage by a protective hinged board and Silver has also been very thoughtful in its provision of easy-access, one-handed lids with simple locking mechanisms, so you can get to your gear without having to drop whatever's to hand.



In fact, forward visibility aside, the only real issue in the cockpit concerns the reversing backrest on the helm seat, which despite its best intentions, brings no significant rewards at all. When you swing it over to face aft, you're still exiled from the lower passengers by means of your elevated position. You can't reach the table without craning forward and while the starboard seat leaves you nowhere to put your legs, the port one leaves them dangling above the deck with a bizarrely positioned grab handle digging you in the back of the calf.

Even so, as you move down below, marvelling at how much this 26-foot weekender offers, it's easy to be surprised by how modest the lower deck compromises seem to be. Ahead of you is a broad, bright and open main double berth that makes good use of the squared off bow. A compact bench at the foot of the bed on the starboard side sits opposite an enclosed heads compartment to port and there's still room for a compact longitudinal guest cabin beneath the upper cockpit sole. It's a very effective use of restricted space but, as on the original Yamarin 81 DC on which it is based, the execution down here is a little way off the pace. The cushions slide about on their bases, unsecured by



The canopy storage solution is exceptional

any straps or fastenings, the LED light strips are bare and exposed and there are some naked bolts protruding through the deckhead from the foredeck railings above. If you spend a night onboard, these will inevitably pick up the moisture and drip water onto your mattress. While the hard, vinyl-lined cabin sides also look like they might be a bit chilly in the winter months, the primary issue down here, on boat number one, concerns the finish of the heads compartment, which is constructed with panel gaps so large that it's almost a misnomer to call the heads 'fully enclosed'.

Conclusion

While our early test model was by no means perfect, the Raptor is actually quite a charming boat to use. You could of



course point to the heavy steering, to the cockpit's obstructed view, or to the lack of lateral composure underway. You might also talk about the failings in terms of finish down below, but when you examine what this boat offers and how that has the potential to impact on the way you go boating, it puts forward a very strong case. After all, this is a good-looking ten-man weekender with massive cockpit versatility, class-leading security, lots of storage and excellent watersports ability. The fact that it also offers 47-knot performance and the capacity to sleep six people takes it way beyond the envelope encompassed by most boats of this length and type. It is of course



Family fun with cruising and watersports potential

a major departure for Silver and as such, it inevitably brings with it some teething troubles that will take time to tweak and resolve. But in view of the outstanding merits of the Raptor's internal design, Silver's new flagship is already a boat that demands consideration.

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